

Around The World In A Day



The Elder Sister

Project Gutenberg's *Mashi and Other Stories*, by Rabindranath Tagore

I

Having described at length the misdeeds of an unfortunate woman's wicked, tyrannical husband, Tara, the woman's neighbour in the village, very shortly declared her verdict: 'Fire be to such a husband's mouth.'

At this Joygopal Babu's wife felt much hurt; it did not become womankind to wish, in any circumstances whatever, a worse species of fire than that of a cigar in a husband's mouth.

When, therefore, she mildly disapproved the verdict, hard-hearted Tara cried with redoubled vehemence: "Twere better to be a widow seven births over than the wife of such a husband," and saying this she broke up the meeting and left.

Sasi said within herself: 'I can't imagine any offence in a husband that could so harden the heart against him.' Even as she turned the matter over in her mind, all the tenderness of her loving soul gushed forth towards her own husband now abroad. Throwing herself with outstretched arms on that part of the bed whereon her husband was wont to lie, she kissed the empty pillow, caught the smell of her husband's head, and, shutting the door, brought out from a wooden box an old and almost faded photograph with some letters in his handwriting, and sat gazing upon them. Thus she passed the hushed noontide alone in her room, musing of old memories and shedding tears of sadness.

It was no new yoke this between Sasikala and Joygopal. They had been married at an early age and had children. Their long companionship had made the days go by in an easy, commonplace sort of way. On neither side had there been any symptoms of excessive passion. They had lived together nearly sixteen years without a break, when her husband was suddenly called away from home on business, and then a great impulse of love awoke in Sasi's soul. As separation strained the tie, love's knot grew tighter, and the passion, whose existence Sasi had not felt, now made her throb with pain.

So it happened that after so many long years, and at such an age, and being the mother of children, Sasi, on this spring noon, in her lonely chamber, lying on the bed of separation, began to dream the sweet dream of a bride in her budding youth. That love of which hitherto she had been unconscious suddenly aroused her with its murmuring music. She wandered a long way up the stream, and saw many a golden mansion and many a grove on either bank; but no foothold could she find now amid the vanished hopes of happiness. She began to say to herself that, when next she met her husband, life should not be insipid nor should the spring come in vain. How very often, in idle disputation or some petty quarrel, had she teased her husband! With all the singleness of a penitent heart she vowed that she would never show impatience again, never oppose her husband's wishes, bear all his commands, and with a tender heart submit to whatever he wished of good or ill; for the husband was all-in-all, the husband was the dearest object of love, the husband was divine.

Sasikala was the only and much-petted daughter of her parents. For this reason, though he had only a small property of his own, Joygopal had no anxieties about the future. His father-in-law had enough to support them in a village with royal state.

And then in his old age a son was born untimely to Sasikala's father. To tell the truth, Sasi was very sore in her mind at this unlooked-for, improper, and unjust action of her parents; nor was Joygopal particularly pleased.

The parents' love centred in this son of their advanced years, and when the newly arrived, diminutive, sleepy brother-in-law seized with his two weak tiny fists all the hopes and expectations of Joygopal, Joygopal found a place in a tea-garden in Assam.

His friends urged him to look for employment hard-by, but whether out of a general feeling of resentment, or knowing the chances of rapid rise in a tea-garden, Joygopal would not pay heed to anybody. He sent his wife and children to his father-in-law's, and left for Assam. It was the first separation between husband and wife in their married life.

This incident made Sasikala very angry with her baby brother. The soreness which may not pass the lips is felt the more keenly within. When the little fellow sucked and slept at his ease, his big sister found a hundred reasons, such as the rice is cold, the boys are too late for school, to worry herself and others, day and night, with her petulant humours.

But in a short time the child's mother died. Before her death, she committed her infant son to her daughter's care.

Then did the motherless child easily conquer his sister's heart. With loud whoops he would fling himself upon her, and with right good-will try to get her mouth, nose, eyes within his own tiny mouth; he would seize her hair within his little fists and refuse to give it up; awaking before the dawn, he would roll over to her side and thrill her with his soft touch, and babble like a noisy brook; later on, he would call her _jiji_ and _jijima_, and in hours of work and rest, by doing forbidden things, eating forbidden food, going to forbidden places, would set up a regular tyranny over her; then Sasi could resist no longer. She surrendered herself completely to this wayward little tyrant. Since the child had no mother, his influence over her became the greater.

II

The child was named Nilmani. When he was two years old his father fell seriously ill. A letter reached Joygopal asking him to come as quickly as possible. When after much trouble he got leave and arrived, Kaliprasanna's last hour had come.

Before he died Kaliprasanna entrusted Joygopal with the charge of his son, and left a quarter of his estate to his daughter.

So Joygopal gave up his appointment, and came home to look after his property.

After a long time husband and wife met again. When a material body breaks it may be put together again. But when two human beings are divided, after a long separation, they never re-unite at the same place, and to the same time; for the mind is a living thing, and moment by moment it grows and changes.

In Sasi reunion stirred a new emotion. The numbness of age-long habit in their old marriage was entirely removed by the longing born of separation, and she seemed to win her husband much more closely than before. Had she not vowed in her mind that whatever days might come, and how long soever they might be, she would never let the brightness of this glowing love for her husband be dimmed.

Of this reunion, however, Joygopal felt differently. When they were constantly together before he had been bound to his wife by his interests and idiosyncrasies. His wife was then a living truth in his life, and there would have been a great rent in the web of his daily habit if she were left out. Consequently Joygopal found himself in deep waters at first when he went abroad. But in time this breach in habit was patched up by a new habit.

And this was not all. Formerly his days went by in the most indolent and careless fashion. For the last two years, the stimulus of bettering his condition had stirred so powerfully in his breast that he had nothing else in his thoughts. As compared with the intensity of this new passion, his old life seemed like an unsubstantial shadow. The greatest changes in a woman's nature are wrought by love; in a man's, by ambition.

Joygopal, when he returned after two years, found his wife not quite the same as of old. To her life his infant brother-in-law had added a new breadth. This part of her life was wholly unfamiliar to him--here he had no communion with his wife. His wife tried hard to share her love for the child with him, but it cannot be said that she succeeded. Sasi would come with the child in her arms, and hold him before her husband with a smiling face--Nilmani would clasp Sasi's neck, and hide his face on her shoulder, and admit no obligation of kindred. Sasi wished that her little brother might show Joygopal all the arts he had learnt to capture a man's mind. But Joygopal was not very keen about it. How could the child show any enthusiasm? Joygopal could not at all understand what there was in the heavy-pated, grave-faced, dusky child that so much love should be wasted on him.

Women quickly understand the ways of love. Sasi at once understood that Joygopal did not care for Nilmani. Henceforth she used to screen her brother with the greatest care--to keep him away from the unloving, repelling look of her husband. Thus the child came to be the treasure of her secret care, the object of her isolated love.

Joygopal was greatly annoyed when Nilmani cried; so Sasi would quickly press the child to her breast, and with her whole heart and soul try to soothe him. And when Nilmani's cry happened to disturb Joygopal's sleep at night, and Joygopal with an expression of displeasure, and in a tortured spirit, growled at the child, Sasi felt humbled and fluttered like a guilty thing. Then she would take up the child in her lap, retire to a distance, and in a voice of pleading love, with such endearments as 'my gold, my treasure, my jewel,' lull him to sleep.

Children will fall out for a hundred things. Formerly in such cases, Sasi would punish her children, and side with her brother, for he was

motherless. Now the law changed with the judge. Nilmani had often to bear heavy punishment without fault and without inquiry. This wrong went like a dagger to Sasi's heart; so she would take her punished brother into her room, and with sweets and toys, and by caressing and kissing him, solace as much as she could his stricken heart.

Thus the more Sasi loved Nilmani, the more Joygopal was annoyed with him. On the other hand, the more Joygopal showed his contempt for Nilmani, the more would Sasi bathe the child with the nectar of her love.

And when the fellow Joygopal behaved harshly to his wife, Sasi would minister to him silently, meekly, and with loving-kindness. But inwardly they hurt each other, moment by moment, about Nilmani.

The hidden clash of a silent conflict like this is far harder to bear than an open quarrel.

III

Nilmani's head was the largest part of him. It seemed as if the Creator had blown through a slender stick a big bubble at its top. The doctors feared sometimes that the child might be as frail and as quickly evanescent as a bubble. For a long time he could neither speak nor walk. Looking at his sad grave face, you might think that his parents had unburdened all the sad weight of their advanced years upon the head of this little child.

With his sister's care and nursing, Nilmani passed the period of danger, and arrived at his sixth year.

In the month of Kartik, on the _bhaiphoti_ [26] day, Sasi had dressed Nilmani up as a little Babu, in coat and _chadar_ and red-bordered _dhoti_, and was giving him the 'brother's mark,' when her outspoken neighbour Tara came in and, for one reason or another, began a quarrel.

[26] Lit. the 'brother's mark.' A beautiful and touching ceremony in which a Hindu sister makes a mark of sandalwood paste on the forehead of her brother and utters a formula, 'putting the barrier in Yama's doorway' (figurative for wishing long life). On these occasions, the sisters entertain their brothers and make them presents of clothes, etc.

"Tis no use," cried she, 'giving the "brother's mark" with so much show and ruining the brother in secret.'

At this Sasi was thunderstruck with astonishment, rage, and pain. Tara repeated the rumour that Sasi and her husband had conspired together

to put the minor Nilmani's property up for sale for arrears of rent, and to purchase it in the name of her husband's cousin. When Sasi heard this, she uttered a curse that those who could spread such a foul lie might be stricken with leprosy in the mouth. And then she went weeping to her husband, and told him of the gossip. Joygopal said: 'Nobody can be trusted in these days. Upen is my aunt's son, and I felt quite safe in leaving him in charge of the property. He could not have allowed the _taluk_ Hasilpur to fall into arrears and purchase it himself in secret, if I had had the least inkling about it.'

'Won't you sue then?' asked Sasi in astonishment.

'Sue one's cousin!' said Joygopal. 'Besides, it would be useless, a simple waste of money.'

It was Sasi's supreme duty to trust her husband's word, but Sasi could not. At last her happy home, the domesticity of her love seemed hateful to her. That home life which had once seemed her supreme refuge was nothing more than a cruel snare of self-interest, which had surrounded them, brother and sister, on all sides. She was a woman, single-handed, and she knew not how she could save the helpless Nilmani. The more she thought, the more her heart filled with terror, loathing, and an infinite love for her imperilled little brother. She thought that, if she only knew how, she would appear before the _Lat Saheb_, [27] nay, write to the Maharani herself, to save her brother's property. The Maharani would surely not allow Nilmani's _taluk_ [28] of Hasilpur, with an income of seven hundred and fifty-eight rupees a year, to be sold.

[27] The Viceroy.

[28] Land.

When Sasi was thus thinking of bringing her husband's cousin to book by appealing to the Maharani herself, Nilmani was suddenly seized with fever and convulsions.

Joygopal called in the village doctor. When Sasi asked for a better doctor, Joygopal said: 'Why, Matilal isn't a bad sort.'

Sasi fell at his feet, and charged him with an oath on her own head; whereupon Joygopal said: 'Well, I shall send for the doctor from town.'

Sasi lay with Nilmani in her lap, nor would Nilmani let her out of his sight for a minute; he clung to her lest by some pretence she should escape; even while he slept he would not loosen his hold of her dress.

Thus the whole day passed, and Joygopal came after nightfall to say

that the doctor was not at home; he had gone to see a patient at a distance. He added that he himself had to leave that very day on account of a lawsuit, and that he had told Matilal, who would regularly call to see the patient.

At night Nilmani wandered in his sleep. As soon as the morning dawned, Sasi, without the least scruple, took a boat with her sick brother, and went straight to the doctor's house. The doctor was at home--he had not left the town. He quickly found lodgings for her, and having installed her under the care of an elderly widow, undertook the treatment of the boy.

The next day Joygopal arrived. Blazing with fury, he ordered his wife to return home with him at once.

'Even if you cut me to pieces, I won't return,' replied his wife. 'You all want to kill my Nilmani, who has no father, no mother, none other than me, but I will save him.'

'Then you remain here, and don't come back to my house,' cried Joygopal indignantly.

Sasi at length fired up. ' _Your_ house! Why, 'tis my brother's!'

'All right, we'll see,' said Joygopal. The neighbours made a great stir over this incident. 'If you want to quarrel with your husband,' said Tara, 'do so at home. What is the good of leaving your house? After all, Joygopal is your husband.'

By spending all the money she had with her, and selling her ornaments, Sasi saved her brother from the jaws of death. Then she heard that the big property which they had in Dwarigram, where their dwelling-house stood, the income of which was more than Rs. 1500 a year, had been transferred by Joygopal into his own name with the help of the Jemindar. And now the whole property belonged to them, not to her brother.

When he had recovered from his illness, Nilmani would cry plaintively: 'Let us go home, sister.' His heart was pining for his nephews and nieces, his companions. So he repeatedly said: 'Let us go home, sister, to that old house of ours.' At this Sasi wept. Where was their home?

But it was no good crying. Her brother had no one else besides herself in the world. Sasi thought of this, wiped her tears, and, entering the Zenana of the Deputy Magistrate, Tarini Babu, appealed to his wife. The Deputy Magistrate knew Joygopal. That a woman should forsake her home, and engage in a dispute with her husband regarding matters of property, greatly incensed him against Sasi. However, Tarini Babu

kept Sasi diverted, and instantly wrote to Joygopal. Joygopal put his wife and brother-in-law into a boat by force, and brought them home.

Husband and wife, after a second separation, met again for the second time! The decree of Prajapati![29]

[29] The Hindu god of marriage.

Having got back his old companions after a long absence, Nilmani was perfectly happy. Seeing his unsuspecting joy, Sasi felt as if her heart would break.

IV

The Magistrate was touring in the Mofussil during the cold weather and pitched his tent within the village to shoot. The Saheb met Nilmani on the village _maidan_. The other boys gave him a wide berth, varying Chanakya's couplet a little, and adding the Saheb to the list of 'the clawed, the toothed, and the horned beasts.' But grave-natured Nilmani in imperturbable curiosity serenely gazed at the Saheb.

The Saheb was amused and came up and asked in Bengali: 'You read at the _pathsala_?'

The boy silently nodded. 'What _pustaks_[30] do you read?' asked the Saheb.

[30] A literary word for books. The colloquial will be _boi_.

As Nilmani did not understand the word _pustak_, he silently fixed his gaze on the Magistrate's face. Nilmani told his sister the story of his meeting the Magistrate with great enthusiasm.

At noon, Joygopal, dressed in trousers, _chapkan_[31] and _pagri_[32] went to pay his salams to the Saheb. A crowd of suitors, _chaprasies_[33] and constables stood about him. Fearing the heat, the Saheb had seated himself at a court-table outside the tent, in the open shade, and placing Joygopal in a chair, questioned him about the state of the village. Having taken the seat of honour in open view of the community, Joygopal swelled inwardly, and thought it would be a good thing if any of the Chakrabartis or Nandis came and saw him there.

[31] A _chapkan_ is a long coat.

[32] Turban.

[33] Servants.

At this moment, a woman, closely veiled, and accompanied by Nilmani, came straight up to the Magistrate. She said: 'Saheb, into your hands I resign my helpless brother. Save him.' The Saheb, seeing the large-headed, solemn boy, whose acquaintance he had already made, and thinking that the woman must be of a respectable family, at once stood up and said: 'Please enter the tent.'

The woman said: 'What I have to say I will say here.'

Joygopal writhed and turned pale. The curious villagers thought it capital fun, and pressed closer. But the moment the Saheb lifted his cane they scampered off.

Holding her brother by the hand, Sasi narrated the history of the orphan from the beginning. As Joygopal tried to interrupt now and then, the Magistrate thundered with a flushed face, '_Chup rao_', and with the tip of his cane motioned to Joygopal to leave the chair and stand up.

Joygopal, inwardly raging against Sasi, stood speechless. Nilmani nestled up close to his sister, and listened awe-struck.

When Sasi had finished her story, the Magistrate put a few questions to Joygopal, and on hearing his answers, kept silence for a long while, and then addressed Sasi thus: 'My good woman, though this matter may not come up before me, still rest assured I will do all that is needful about it. You can return home with your brother without the least misgiving.'

Sasi said: 'Saheb, so long as he does not get back his own home, I dare not take him there. Unless you keep Nilmani with you, none else will be able to save him.'

'And what would you do?' queried the Saheb.

'I will retire to my husband's house,' said Sasi; 'there is nothing to fear for me.'

The Saheb smiled a little, and, as there was nothing else to do, agreed to take charge of this lean, dusty, grave, sedate, gentle Bengali boy whose neck was ringed with amulets.

When Sasi was about to take her leave, the boy clutched her dress. 'Don't be frightened, _baba_,--come,' said the Saheb. With tears streaming behind her veil, Sasi said: 'Do go, my brother, my darling brother--you will meet your sister again!'

Saying this she embraced him and stroked his head and back, and

releasing her dress, hastily withdrew; and just then the Saheb put his left arm round him. The child wailed out: 'Sister, oh, my sister!' Sasi turned round at once, and with outstretched arm made a sign of speechless solace, and with a bursting heart withdrew.

Again in that old, ever-familiar house husband and wife met. The decree of Prajapati!

But this union did not last long. For soon after the villagers learnt one morning that Sasi had died of cholera in the night, and had been instantly cremated.

None uttered a word about it. Only neighbour Tara would sometimes be on the point of bursting out, but people would shut up her mouth, saying, 'Hush!'

At parting, Sasi gave her word to her brother they would meet again. Where that word was kept none can tell.

Redondillas A Unos Cabellos Prendidos Con Un Cordón De Seda Verde

Jorge de Montemayor

(† 1561)

Cabellos, ¡cuánta mudanza	25
He visto después que os ví,	
Y cuán mal parece ahí	
Ese color de esperanza!	
¡Ay! cabellos, cuantos días	

Yo mi Diana miraba.	
Si os traía ó si os dejaba,	
Con otras mil niñerías!	
Y, ¡cuántas veces llorando	5
(¡Ay, lágrimas engañosas!)	

Pedía celos de cosas	
De que yo estaba burlando!	
Los ojos que me mataban,	
Decid, dorados cabellos,	10
¿Qué culpa tuve en creellos,	
Pues ellos me aseguraban?	

¿No visteis vos que algún día	
Mil lágrimas derramaba,	
Basta que yo le juraba	15
Que sus palabras creía?	
Sobre el arena sentada	
De aquel río la ví yo,	

Do con el dedo escribió
Antes muerta que mudada.
Miren amor lo que ordena,
Que un hombre llegue á creer
Cosas dichas por mujer
Y escritas en el arena.

20

The Project Gutenberg eBook, *A Spanish Anthology*, Edited by J. D. M.
(Jeremiah Denis Matthias) Ford

The Recompense

ROBERT HILLYER

The Project Gutenberg EBook of *Eight Harvard Poets*

When the last song is sung, and the last spark
Of light dies out forever, and the dark,
The voiceless dark eternal shrouds the earth;
When the last cries of pain and shouts of mirth
Sink in the desolate silences of space;
Where then shall flower the beauty of your face,
O Love the laughing, Youth the rose-in-hand,
In what unknown and undiscovered land
Shall flower then the beauty of your face?

I know not but I know that all returns
At last unchanged, and to the heart that yearns
Shall be repaid all loneliness and loss.
Sometime with shadowy sails shall fly across
The shoreless ocean of infinity
A ship from out the past, and the great sea
Of life shall bear you from the strange worlds over
The waves, and back again to the old lover.

Yes, in some future far beyond surmise
You will dream here with half-remembering eyes,
And I shall write these words, content awhile
In the slow round of time to see you smile.

Before The War

The Project Gutenberg EBook of *New Poems*, by D. H. Lawrence

Charity.

BY the river
In the black wet night as the furtive rain slinks
down,
Dropping and starting from sleep
Alone on a seat
A woman crouches.

I must go back to her.

I want to give her
Some money. Her hand slips out of the breast of
her gown
Asleep. My fingers creep
Carefully over the sweet
Thumb-mound, into the palm's deep pouches.

So, the gift!

God, how she starts!
And looks at me, and looks in the palm of her hand!
And again at me!
I turn and run
Down the Embankment, run for my life.

But why?--why?

Because of my heart's
Beating like sobs, I come to myself, and stand
In the street spilled over splendidly
With wet, flat lights. What I've done
I know not, my soul is in strife.

The touch was on the quick. I want to forget.

The Shrine

The Project Gutenberg EBook of *Sea Garden*, by Hilda Doolittle

("SHE WATCHES OVER THE SEA")

I

Are your rocks shelter for ships--

have you sent galleys from your beach,
are you graded--a safe crescent--
where the tide lifts them back to port--
are you full and sweet,
tempting the quiet
to depart in their trading ships?

Nay, you are great, fierce, evil--
you are the land-blight--
you have tempted men
but they perished on your cliffs.

Your lights are but dank shoals,
slate and pebble and wet shells
and seaweed fastened to the rocks.

It was evil--evil
when they found you,
when the quiet men looked at you--
they sought a headland
shaded with ledge of cliff
from the wind-blast.

But you--you are unsheltered,
cut with the weight of wind--
you shudder when it strikes,
then lift, swelled with the blast--
you sink as the tide sinks,
you shrill under hail, and sound
thunder when thunder sounds.
You are useless--
when the tides swirl
your boulders cut and wreck
the staggering ships.

II

You are useless,
O grave, O beautiful,
the landsmen tell it--I have heard--
you are useless.

And the wind sounds with this
and the sea
where rollers shot with blue
cut under deeper blue.

O but stay tender, enchanted

where wave-lengths cut you
apart from all the rest--
for we have found you,
we watch the splendour of you,
we thread throat on throat of freesia
for your shelf.

You are not forgot,
O plunder of lilies,
honey is not more sweet
than the salt stretch of your beach.

III

Stay--stay--
but terror has caught us now,
we passed the men in ships,
we dared deeper than the fisher-folk
and you strike us with terror
O bright shaft.

Flame passes under us
and sparks that unknot the flesh,
sorrow, splitting bone from bone,
splendour athwart our eyes
and rifts in the splendour,
sparks and scattered light.

Many warned of this,
men said:
there are wrecks on the fore-beach,
wind will beat your ship,
there is no shelter in that headland,
it is useless waste, that edge,
that front of rock--
sea-gulls clang beyond the breakers,
none venture to that spot.

IV

But hail--
as the tide slackens,
as the wind beats out,
we hail this shore--
we sing to you,
spirit between the headlands
and the further rocks.

Though oak-beams split,
though boats and sea-men flounder,
and the strait grind sand with sand
and cut boulders to sand and drift--

your eyes have pardoned our faults,
your hands have touched us--
you have leaned forward a little
and the waves can never thrust us back
from the splendour of your ragged coast.

The Champion Of The Red Belt

Narrator, P. MINAHAN, Malinmore, Glencolumkille, co. Donegal.
The Project Gutenberg EBook of *West Irish Folk-Tales and Romances*, by Various

There was a king and a queen, and they had three sons. She died with the third. The king married another queen. She had ill-feeling towards the children. The king had no rest till he would banish the children. She took to her bed and would not live if he would not do something or other with them. He went to an old man who was in the town. He told him in what way he was. The old man told him to get a barrel made and to put the children into it. "Put a red belt on one and a black belt on the other."

He got the barrel made, and an air-hole in it, and a weight for ballast, to keep it from rolling. He put the children into the barrel then. He put two swords with them. He put them out on the sea. The barrel was going before the wind till it came under the court and castle of the King of Greece.

The king had a herdsman; the herdsman was herding cows. The king had one cow, and she was troublesome minding, licking the stones that were on the shore. There was seaweed growing on the stones. He ran down to the cow. He came to the stone. He saw a white spot on the stone. He kept looking at the stone, and he saw that it was wood was in it. He tumbled it and cut the end out of it. He found two children and two swords. He put his hand down into the barrel. He took up the two children. He never saw two that were so fair as they. He took the two children home. He said it was Providence sent them to him.

They were with him. When he would hear anyone coming into his house, he ordered the children out of the room. It was told the king that the herdsman had two children (found) in a barrel on the shore. The king was not willing to believe it. He said he would go himself to the herdsman. He went to him. He asked him if he found two children. The herdsman said

he did not find. "If you have found them," said the king, "do not conceal them from me."

He said he had found. He told the children to come down out of the room. They came down to the king. The king took hold of the children with his hands. He viewed them. "Well," said the king, "wherever it is the children have come from, there is royal blood in them." The king had no child but one little girl.

"Give me the children. I will give them better care than you. I will support yourself and your old woman as long as you are alive."

He could not refuse. The king took the children with him. He cared for them till they grew to be young men. The king's daughter thought they were her brothers. The king put learning on them. They were the two champions. They were fowling every day that was fine. At that time there was a great hurling match to come off. The King of Lochlann sent a challenge to the King of Greece for a hurling match, kingdom to be staked against kingdom. There was a pretty strand under the court and castle of the King of Greece. When the day of the hurling match came, the King of Greece ordered the two champions to go hunting. They went hunting. They were not long gone from the house when they met five young men, every one of them with a hurling stick. "I don't know where they can be going," said the champion of the red belt.

"I don't know," said the champion of the black belt. They saw five others coming the same way. He said to one of them he wondered where they were going. "I will tell you; and it is a great wonder that you are going fowling to-day."

"Why is that?" said the champion. "I believe you have heard all about it yourself."

"I have heard nothing."

"The kingdom of your father is staked against the kingdom of the King of Lochlann in a hurling match to-day. We are going to the hurling match on behalf of your father."

They returned home. They said to the King of Greece they would not lose his kingdom, but would play on his behalf. They threw off their hunting suits. They put on light suits for running. They got two hurls. They went to the strand. There was a great crowd on the strand. The ball was going out. There were twenty-four men on each side. They said their father's kingdom should not be lost, that they would play on his behalf. Two were then put out, and they were put then in their place. There were riders keeping the strand clear. The ball was put in the middle of the strand down in the sand. The forty-eight men came round the ball. The champion of the red belt got the ball. He struck it. When it fell again he was

shaking it, and he struck it again. He sent it to the other end. He said to the King of Lochlann that his kingdom was lost. The King of Lochlann said his men had not got fair play in the hurling. "I will give you fair play," said the champion of the red belt; "myself and my brother to hurl against your four-and-twenty; and this is the bargain I'll make with you:—Whoever it is that sends the ball to the goal is to have a blow with his hurl on the others: if your four-and-twenty men win the goal against us, they have four-and-twenty blows to strike on us. If we win the goal, we have a blow on every one of them."

The ball was put in the sand. They gathered round it. The champion of the red belt had the ball. He struck it. When it fell he was shaking it again. Not one man on the strand got a blow at it till he put it to the goal.

"Now," said he, "did you not get fair play?"

"I got it; you are the best champion ever I saw."

"Put the men in a row that I may get my blows."

He put the men standing in a row. "Now," said he to his brother, "any man that I don't knock down, knock him down you."

He struck the first blow. He killed. He struck the second blow then. He killed. He was striking and killing. There was one man at the end outside. When he came killing, drawing towards him, he went out of the row. He went up on the side of a hill.

"Death and destruction and the death-bands on you, champion of the red belt! It is you that are doing the slaughter on this strand to-day. Don't you know what country you came out of?—that it is out of a two-ended barrel you came in to the court and castle of the King of Greece?"

"Sit down, and wait till I come to you."

"I will not wait. I saw you killing many a one. Perhaps you will kill me."

"My word to you, I will not touch you till you tell me about the barrel."

"I will take your word."

He went up then till he came to the place where he was sitting. "What is it you say about the barrel?"

"It is a two-ended barrel the old man found by the sea. He took you out of the barrel; he took you home. The king heard he had found two children in the barrel. He did not believe it. He went down to the old man to

see if he had found them. The old man said he had. He brought down the youngsters. The king sat down. He took hold of them by the hand. He viewed them. He said they had royal blood.”

““Give me the children. I will care for them better than you.’

““It is hard for me to give them from me.’

“He could not refuse the king. The king said he would not let them have a day of want. ‘I will support you and your old woman as long as you are alive.’

“The King of Greece is not your father,” said the man. “He had no family but the one young girl in the house.”

“I am grateful to you for all that you have told me about the way I came here. If I live, I will do you a service.”

They were troubled. They knew not whence they had come. They went home. The King of Greece welcomed his two sons.

“Put not your sonship upon us. We are only the children of a poor man who had no means to rear us. I will sleep no night but this night in your house till I find out how I came hither.”

“Do not so,” said the king; “stay in this place. I will give you the half of my kingdom.”

“I would not stay if you gave me your kingdom all.”

When the king’s daughter heard he was not her brother, she was ready to die unless he married her. He said to her he would not marry her; that he would wear his two legs down to his two knees till he found out how he came. “If I find that out, I will come to you and marry you.”

They were greatly troubled when they were departing. They went till they came to the sea. He threw his hat out. He made a ship of the hat, a mast of his stick, a flag of his shirt. He hoisted the sails speckled spotted, to the top of the straight mast. He turned the prow to sea, the stern to shore, and he left not a rope without breaking, nor a cable without rending, till he was listening to the blowing of the seals and the roaring of the great beasts, to the screams of the sea-gulls; till the little red-mouthed fishes were rising on the sole and the palm of the oars; till they steered the vessel in under court and castle of the King of the Underwaveland.

They put fastening on the ship. They went on the land. They were going with themselves. There was no one at all coming towards them. They were all going one way, so that there was a great crowd where they were

stopping. Said the brother, "Perhaps you will find some one in the crowd to tell you how we came" (i.e., our origin).

They went on with themselves. A man met them. They asked him what was the cause why the people on the island were all going one way.

"It has happened you were not reared in the island when you do not know the reason of the people's going. The King of Underwaveland has but one daughter. She is going to be married to-morrow to the son of the King of the Eastern World. There is an invitation to the wedding to all the island. There are open cellars. There is eating and drinking to all that come."

They went on till they came to the king's house. There was a great crowd there. They were strangers in it. No one gave them any heed. No one was there without an invitation except themselves.

"Stand at the door behind," said the champion of the red belt to his brother; "I will stand at this door."

No one went in or out that they did not strike. They were killing them. The king got word there were two blackguards at the door who were killing numbers of people. The king rose out. He said he thought there was not a blackguard at all in the crowd; that there was eating and drinking for every one to get. The champion of the red belt said they were not blackguards at all; they were two strangers on the island; they would demean themselves by coming uninvited. The king bowed to them and gave them an invitation. He would invite (he said) any company in which they were.

He drew them into the parlour. The bride was there getting ready for the marriage. She and her mother began to converse. The bride said that if she knew he had no wife, she would not marry a man but him. The mother told the king what the bride said. The king told the champion of the red belt what the bride said. The champion of the red belt said, "I have a wife. My brother is single; and if it is her will to marry him, I am satisfied."

She sent a letter to the son of the King of the Eastern World that she had a husband she preferred to him. He sent a letter to her that he would not give up his wife to any man, without his fighting for her. The champion of the black belt sent a letter to him that he would fight at midday on the morrow, in such and such a place. When the morrow came the champion of the black belt washed himself for the fight. He told the champion of the red belt to take care of the woman till he came back. He went then. He was going up the road. He met an old red man sitting by the road side. He had a great harp, and he was playing on it. He asked the champion of the black belt to sit down while he played him a tune. He said he had no time, that he was going to battle; but the old man

told him to stand a little while till he played him one tune. He stood a while; the first strain the old man played, he fell asleep. He was sleeping there then till the son of the King of the Eastern World came. He jumped down from his carriage, and cut his head off. He went riding back. The champion of the red belt knew nothing till he came to the hall door.

“My brother is killed,” said he; “short it is till I kill you.”

“Don’t do that,” said the bride; “leave it to me to do.”

“If you don’t do it I will destroy the island.”

The son of the King of the Eastern World came up to the hall door. She rose out. She caught him by the hand. He said he was fatigued after the battle. They went into the house. She opened a cupboard; she gave him a cup of drink. He drank her health. When he raised the cup of drink he bent his head backwards. She drew a sword from under her apron. She lopped the head from him.

“If you had not been so quick doing it, I would have done the same to you as to him,” said the champion of the red belt.

He went then to the place where his brother was killed. When he came to it he was troubled. There came a lump of mist out of the head. Some one spoke to him out of the mist:

“Go to the Eastern World; the children of Kanikinn have a bottle of the water of healing that brings the dead to life.”

It put great joy on him. He went then towards the Eastern World. He could get no information of it. He then went on three days. He could get no information of it. Then he went on for three days more. Every one had information to give him then. An old man was putting bad spirits on him.

“There is a yard around the court ten feet high. It is written on the gate: “If you go in you will never come out alive.”

He went up to the gate. He cleared it at a leap. There were three sons of Kanikinn in an alley playing ball. They spied the champion coming in the gate. Said one of the young men,

“You have come in very nimbly; not so nimbly will you go out.”

“He will go,” said the eldest; “any champion who could make that leap is a gentleman. Don’t speak an angry word till I permit.”

The champion of the red belt then came forward and saluted them as politely as he could. He told them how things were with him; that he had

come there to seek the bottle of the water of healing that made the dead alive.

“Well!” said the other, “there is ill luck on you. The king knight of the black castle took that bottle from me seven years ago. There is not a day he does not kill three hundred men, and it is better for you to tarry here with me; I will give you a third of my possessions, for I fear he will kill you.”

“I am thankful to you for your kindness: since I have come so far I will go to meet him whether I live or die.”

He asked was there any short way at all to the castle. He showed him a short way. He said farewell. He went on till he came to the gate, till he cleared the gate out with a leap. He was going with himself then for a while till he saw the black castle. He went into the yard. He could see no one. He feared to go in. Night was coming, and he went in, whether he was to live or die. There was no one within, but the house was full of feathers. He said it was like a slaughter-house. He heard a loud sound coming into the house. He was startled. There was a barrel at the side of the house. He went behind it. Then the light burst from the door, and the king knight of the black castle came. He hung his sword on a peg. The blood was dripping from the tip of it. He had on a coat of steel. He went to put off the coat. The champion of the red belt rose from behind the barrel. “If that is your fighting suit, do not put it off you till you fight with me.”

Said the king knight of the black castle, “It is a man without life you are. I am only after drawing my sword out of the last man of three hundred, but I will not fight you till morning. If it is lodging for the night you want, you will get it.”

“That is what I want.”

“Don’t be afraid. I will not touch you till morning.”

The king knight of the black castle set to till he lighted the fire with sticks and faggots. He told the other to sit near the fire. The champion of the red belt was watching the door. He asked him was there any one there except himself. The king knight of the black castle said there was not; “and great joy is there on me to have you here to-night. I have talked with no one for seven years.”

The champion of the red belt said he had heard that there was with him a bottle of the water of healing, that made the dead alive; that his brother was killed. Would he give him the loan of the bottle?

“I have not got the bottle. That is the bottle that makes people alive. My stepmother took it from me seven years ago. There is not a day I don’t

kill three hundred men, and my stepmother brings them to life again. A hag of sorceries she turned out, to put pains on me, that they will never be killed for me, while I live; and but that providence puts strength in my heart, I would not get the better of them.”

When they took their supper the champion of the red belt asked him, “Have you any one at all but yourself?”

“No,” said the king knight of the black castle. Then he asked if he had been brought up on the island. He said, “Not he; that it was a son of the King of Erin was in it; that his mother died when he was born; that the king married another queen.”

“Were there any other (children) but yourself?” said the champion of the red belt.

“There were two other brothers.”

“Are they alive?”

“Oh! I think not. They were put in a two-ended barrel.”

“Did you hear that your father put any mark on them?”

“He said he put a red belt on one, a black belt on the other.”

“True it is; people meet and the hills meet not. I am your brother; but the champion of the black belt is dead.”

He stripped and showed him the belt. The two fell into an embrace. Then they went to rest. When the day came on the morrow the king knight of the black castle rose. He told his brother not to rise, as he was tired, before breakfast was ready. Then he got up and washed himself. They took their breakfast. The king knight of the black castle said it was a pity he could not stop during the day to keep him company.

“Stay here, you, till I go and do my sufficiency of killing as quickly as I can.”

“What would you think if I went in your place to-day?”

“It would be no use for you to go with only the strength providence has given you. You would not get the better of them.”

Said the champion of the red belt, “We are two brothers. It is a poor thing for me if I can’t kill for one day what you are killing for seven years.”

The champion of the red belt took his sword. The other was not satisfied

at all to let him go. He would not stay on his advice.

“Put on my suit of steel; I could not do much without that.”

“I will not put it on. Unless I fight in the suit that’s on me, I am beaten.”

He went till he came to the three hundred men. He asked them if they were ready. They said they were. When they saw the little man coming they were laughing and mocking him. He went straight in through them. He made heaps of their heads and their feet, a prize of their arms and their clothes. When he killed the three hundred, he stood up. He said what was the good of killing them, and they to be alive again in the morning? Then he lay down among the dead men to see what it was brought them to life. There came a hag, with one leg out of her haunch, one eye in her forehead, a bottle of the water of healing on a button that was on her breast. There was a feather in the bottle. She rubbed the feather on the first man she came to. She made nine of them alive. The champion of the red belt arose and killed the nine. Then he and the one-legged hag struck together. They were fighting a long time. He got angry that he was wasting the day. He lopped the head off her. He took the bottle that was hanging on her breast. He hung it on the button that was on his coat. Then said the hag, when she was falling,—

“I lay on thee the spells of the art of the druid, to be feeble in strength as a woman in travail, in the place of the camp or the battle, if you go not to meet three hundred cats. Tell them you have slain three hundred men and the one-legged hag.”

He went forward then till he came to the three hundred cats. He cried out to them that he had killed three hundred men and the one-legged hag.

Said they: “It is dearly you will pay for that.”

He and the cats went to battle. The cats leaped above him. He made a rush at them. He was killing them as fast as he could, till he killed them all but the great old speckled cat. Said she when she was falling,—

“I lay on thee the spells of the art of the druid, to be feeble in strength as a woman in travail, in the place of the camp and the battle, if you go not to fight the Wether of Fuerish Fwee-erë. Tell him you have slain three hundred men, three hundred cats, and the one-legged hag.”

He went forward in the camp. He and the Wether of Fuerish Fwee-erë went to battle. He came behind him to come on him with a run to kill him. He missed him the first time. He went behind him again. He came at him with a run. When the champion of the red belt saw the Wether approaching him, he made ready not to miss him. The Wether came forward. The champion of the red belt put the sword through his heart. Said he, when he was

falling,—

“I lay on thee the spells of the art of the druid, to be feeble in strength as a woman in travail, in the camp and the battle, till thou goest to meet the king cat of the Western Island. Tell him you have slain three hundred men, and three hundred cats, and the one-legged hag, and the Wether of Fuerish Fwee-erë.”

He went forward in the camp. He met the king cat of the Western Island.

“Death on you! Short is your own life now. Little I thought I was not done with you the day that I put you in the barrel.”

“Hideous hag! I am stronger to-day than I was that day.”

He and the hag struck together, till he made hard of the soft, and soft of the hard, and (made) the fresh-water wells in the middle of the grey stones. From the hollows of the world to the heights of the world they came to look on at the fight was between them.

She had a long tail. There was a poison spot on the tail. There was a great claw at the tip of the tail. She rose on high. She came down on his head. He met her with the sword. She curved her tail and put the claw in his hand. He was bleeding. The day was hot and he was bleeding greatly. Down she came with a slap. She put the poison spot through his heart. She got the claw fixed in his heart. She drew out his heart on his side. When the man was falling, the cat opened her mouth as wide as she could with the rage that was on her; and when he saw her mouth open, and he falling, he thrust his hand into her mouth and pulled out her heart. The two fell dead. They were lying dead then.

The king knight of the black castle was troubled that he let his brother go to fight in his place. He went on his track to see how he was doing. He went forward in the camp. He found the three hundred men killed. He went forward farther in the camp. He found the one-legged hag killed. He went still forward in the camp. He found the three hundred cats killed. He went still forward in the camp. He found the Wether of Fuerish Fwee-erë killed. He went on and found his brother and his stepmother killed. Then he did not know what to do. He was afraid lest he might put the cat's heart into the man; for the evil temper of the cat might drive the man mad and kill him. The lump of mist came. It spoke to him: “Is it not easy for you to distinguish between the big heart of the man and the little heart of the cat?”

He took up the big heart. He washed it and fixed it in his brother. He found the bottle of the water of healing that was hanging on his brother. He dipped a feather in the bottle and rubbed it to his brother's mouth. His brother arose alive.

“I seem as if I was asleep.”

“Did you not wonder then? It was providence saved me when I did not come to battle with you on the night when you rose up from behind the barrel, or you would have killed me as you have done (to the others) to-day.”

“What good is it for you to be big when you are not a good soldier?”

“It is long since I have had time any day to kill birds. Many’s the time I was hungry when I killed the three hundred men. I had no time to kill birds for my breakfast in the morning. To-day I have time to kill plenty.”

“You will not kill a beast to-day,” said the champion of the red belt.

He then went killing. He killed. The big man went among the gathering of the birds. He was killing till night. He said he had enough killed.

Then they went home. They got ready their supper. They took their supper. They went to rest them. The king knight of the black castle was not going to rise very early. He had nothing to kill.

They were going to take a walk in the wood. “Is there a woman at all who is good for much on the island?” said the champion of the red belt.

“There is a king’s daughter on the island, and I think I would get her in marriage.”

He and his brother went to the king’s house. He got the king’s daughter in marriage. Came the priest of the pattens and the clerk of the bell. The pair were married. The wedding lasted nine nights and nine days. He took her home then. They stayed at home a couple of days until he rested.

“Now,” said the champion of the red belt, “you have a wife; it is time for me to go to my brother to make him alive.”

“I will be with you,” said the king knight of the black castle.

They came to his brother. He made his brother alive as well as ever he was. They went to the house of the King of Underwaveland. There was great joy on the bride to see her husband. Came the priest of the pattens and the clerk of the bell. The pair were married.

“Now,” said the champion of the red belt, “you have both your wives. It is right for you to go with me till I get my wife.”

They went on then to the island of the King of Greece. When the daughter of the King of Greece saw the champion of the red belt there was great joy on her. They told the King of Greece what their birth was. Came the priest of the pattens and the clerk of the bell. The pair were married.

The wedding lasted nine nights and nine days.

Cathleen Ni Houlihan

by

William B. Yeats

The Project Gutenberg EBook of *The Unicorn from the Stars and Other Plays*, by
William B. Yeats and Lady Gregory

CHARACTERS

PETER GILLANE.

MICHAEL GILLANE _his son, going to be married_.

PATRICK GILLANE _a lad of twelve, Michael's brother_.

BRIDGET GILLANE _Peter's wife_.

DELIA CAHEL _engaged to_ MICHAEL.

THE POOR OLD WOMAN.

NEIGHBOURS.

SCENE: _Interior of a cottage close to Killala, in 1798._ BRIDGET _is standing at a table undoing a parcel._ PETER _is sitting at one side of the fire,_ PATRICK _at the other_.

PETER. What is that sound I hear?

PATRICK. I don't hear anything. [_He listens._] I hear it now. It's like cheering. [_He goes to the window and looks out._] I wonder what they are cheering about. I don't see anybody.

PETER. It might be a hurling match.

PATRICK. There's no hurling to-day. It must be down in the town the cheering is.

BRIDGET. I suppose the boys must be having some sport of their own. Come over here, Peter, and look at Michael's wedding-clothes.

PETER [_ shifts his chair to table_]. Those are grand clothes, indeed.

BRIDGET. You hadn't clothes like that when you married me, and no coat to put on of a Sunday any more than any other day.

PETER. That is true, indeed. We never thought a son of our own would be wearing a suit of that sort for his wedding, or have so good a place to bring a wife to.

PATRICK [_ who is still at the window_]. There's an old woman coming down the road. I don't know, is it here she's coming?

BRIDGET. It will be a neighbour coming to hear about Michael's wedding. Can you see who it is?

PATRICK. I think it is a stranger, but she's not coming to the house. She's turned into the gap that goes down where Murteen and his sons are shearing sheep. [_ He turns towards_ BRIDGET.] Do you remember what Winny of the Cross Roads was saying the other night about the strange woman that goes through the country whatever time there's war or trouble coming?

BRIDGET. Don't be bothering us about Winny's talk, but go and open the door for your brother. I hear him coming up the path.

PETER. I hope he has brought Delia's fortune with him safe, for fear her people might go back on the bargain and I after making it. Trouble enough I had making it.

[PATRICK _opens the door and_ MICHAEL _comes in._]

BRIDGET. What kept you, Michael? We were looking out for you this long time.

MICHAEL. I went round by the priest's house to bid him be ready to marry us to-morrow.

BRIDGET. Did he say anything?

MICHAEL. He said it was a very nice match, and that he was never better pleased to marry any two in his parish than myself and Delia Cahel.

PETER. Have you got the fortune, Michael?

MICHAEL. Here it is.

[_ He puts bag on table and goes over and leans against the chimney-jamb._ BRIDGET, _who has been all this time examining the clothes, pulling the seams and trying the lining of the pockets, etc., puts the clothes on the dresser._]

PETER [_ getting up and taking the bag in his hand and turning out the money_]. Yes, I made the bargain well for you, Michael. Old John Cahel would sooner have kept a share of this awhile longer. "Let me keep the half of it till the first boy is born," says he. "You will not," says I. "Whether there is or is not a boy, the whole hundred pounds must be in Michael's hands before he brings your daughter in the house." The wife spoke to him then, and he gave in at the end.

BRIDGET. You seem well pleased to be handling the money, Peter.

PETER. Indeed, I wish I had had the luck to get a hundred pounds, or twenty pounds itself, with the wife I married.

BRIDGET. Well, if I didn't bring much I didn't get much. What had you the day I married you but a flock of hens and you feeding them, and a few lambs and you driving them to the market at Ballina? [_ She is vexed and bangs a jug on the dresser._] If I brought no fortune, I worked it out in my bones, laying down the baby, Michael that is standing there now, on a stook of straw, while I dug the potatoes, and never asking big dresses or anything but to be working.

PETER. That is true, indeed. [_ He pats her arm._]

BRIDGET. Leave me alone now till I ready the house for the woman that is to come into it.

PETER. You are the best woman in Ireland, but money is good, too. [_ He begins handling the money again and sits down._] I never thought to see so much money within my four walls. We can do great things now we have it. We can take the ten acres of land we have a chance of since Jamsie Dempsey died, and stock it. We will go to the fair of Ballina to buy the stock. Did Delia ask any of the money for her own use, Michael?

MICHAEL. She did not, indeed. She did not seem to take much notice of it, or to look at it at all.

BRIDGET. That's no wonder. Why would she look at it when she had yourself to look at, a fine, strong young man? It is proud she must be to get you, a good steady boy that will make use of the money, and not be running through it or spending it on drink like another.

PETER. It's likely Michael himself was not thinking much of the fortune either, but of what sort the girl was to look at.

MICHAEL [_ coming over towards the table_]. Well, you would like a nice comely girl to be beside you, and to go walking with you. The fortune only lasts for a while, but the woman will be there always.

[_ Cheers._]

PATRICK [_ turning round from the window_]. They are cheering again down in the town. Maybe they are landing horses from Enniscrone. They do be cheering when the horses take the water well.

MICHAEL. There are no horses in it. Where would they be going and no fair at hand? Go down to the town, Patrick, and see what is going on.

PATRICK [_ opens the door to go out, but stops for a moment on the threshold_]. Will Delia remember, do you think, to bring the greyhound pup she promised me when she would be coming to the house?

MICHAEL. She will surely.

[PATRICK _goes out, leaving the door open._]

PETER. It will be Patrick's turn next to be looking for a fortune, but he won't find it so easy to get it and he with no place of his own.

BRIDGET. I do be thinking sometimes, now things are going so well with us, and the Cahels such a good back to us in the district, and Delia's own uncle a priest, we might be put in the way of making Patrick a priest some day, and he so good at his books.

PETER. Time enough, time enough; you have always your head full of plans, Bridget.

BRIDGET. We will be well able to give him learning, and not to send him trampling the country like a poor scholar that lives on charity.

[_ Cheers._]

MICHAEL. They're not done cheering yet.

[_ He goes over to the door and stands there for a moment, putting up his hand to shade his eyes._]

BRIDGET. Do you see anything?

MICHAEL. I see an old woman coming up the path.

BRIDGET. Who is it, I wonder. It must be the strange woman Patrick saw awhile ago.

MICHAEL. I don't think it's one of the neighbours anyway, but she has her cloak over her face.

BRIDGET. It might be some poor woman heard we were making ready for the wedding and came to look for her share.

PETER. I may as well put the money out of sight. There is no use leaving it out for every stranger to look at.

[_ He goes over to a large box in the corner, opens it, and puts the bag in and fumbles at the lock._]

MICHAEL. There she is, father! [_ An_ Old Woman _passes the window slowly; she looks at_ MICHAEL _as she passes._] I'd sooner a stranger not to come to the house the night before my wedding.

BRIDGET. Open the door, Michael; don't keep the poor woman waiting.

[_ The_ OLD WOMAN _comes in._ MICHAEL _stands aside to make way for her._]

OLD WOMAN. God save all here!

PETER. God save you kindly!

OLD WOMAN. You have good shelter here.

PETER. You are welcome to whatever shelter we have.

BRIDGET. Sit down there by the fire and welcome.

OLD WOMAN [_ warming her hands_]. There is a hard wind outside.

[MICHAEL _watches her curiously from the door_. PETER _comes over to the table._]

PETER. Have you travelled far to-day?

OLD WOMAN. I have travelled far, very far; there are few have travelled so far as myself, and there's many a one that doesn't make me welcome. There was one that had strong sons I thought were friends of mine, but they were shearing their sheep, and they wouldn't listen to me.

PETER. It's a pity indeed for any person to have no place of their own.

OLD WOMAN. That's true for you indeed, and it's long I'm on the roads

since I first went wandering.

BRIDGET. It is a wonder you are not worn out with so much wandering.

OLD WOMAN. Sometimes my feet are tired and my hands are quiet, but there is no quiet in my heart. When the people see me quiet, they think old age has come on me and that all the stir has gone out of me. But when the trouble is on me I must be talking to my friends.

BRIDGET. What was it put you wandering?

OLD WOMAN. Too many strangers in the house.

BRIDGET. Indeed you look as if you'd had your share of trouble.

OLD WOMAN. I have had trouble indeed.

BRIDGET. What was it put the trouble on you?

OLD WOMAN. My land that was taken from me.

PETER. Was it much land they took from you?

OLD WOMAN. My four beautiful green fields.

PETER [_ aside to_ BRIDGET]. Do you think could she be the widow Casey that was put out of her holding at Kilglass awhile ago?

BRIDGET. She is not. I saw the widow Casey one time at the market in Ballina, a stout fresh woman.

PETER [_ to_ OLD WOMAN]. Did you hear a noise of cheering, and you coming up the hill?

OLD WOMAN. I thought I heard the noise I used to hear when my friends came to visit me. [_ She begins singing half to herself. _]

I will go cry with the woman,
For yellow-haired Donough is dead,
With a hempen rope for a neckcloth,
And a white cloth on his head,--

MICHAEL [_ coming from the door_]. What is that you are singing, ma'am?

OLD WOMAN. Singing I am about a man I knew one time, yellow-haired Donough, that was hanged in Galway. [_ She goes on singing, much louder. _]

I am come to cry with you, woman,

My hair is unwound and unbound;
I remember him ploughing his field,
Turning up the red side of the ground,

And building his barn on the hill
With the good mortared stone;
O! we'd have pulled down the gallows
Had it happened in Enniscrone!

MICHAEL. What was it brought him to his death?

OLD WOMAN. He died for love of me: many a man has died for love of me.

PETER [_aside to_ BRIDGET]. Her trouble has put her wits astray.

MICHAEL. Is it long since that song was made? Is it long since he got his death?

OLD WOMAN. Not long, not long. But there were others that died for love of me a long time ago.

MICHAEL. Were they neighbours of your own, ma'am?

OLD WOMAN. Come here beside me and I'll tell you about them. [MICHAEL _sits down beside her at the hearth._] There was a red man of the O'Donnells from the north, and a man of the O'Sullivans from the south, and there was one Brian that lost his life at Clontarf by the sea, and there were a great many in the west, some that died hundreds of years ago, and there are some that will die to-morrow.

MICHAEL. Is it in the west that men will die to-morrow?

OLD WOMAN. Come nearer, nearer to me.

BRIDGET. Is she right, do you think? Or is she a woman from beyond the world?

PETER. She doesn't know well what she's talking about, with the want and the trouble she has gone through.

BRIDGET. The poor thing, we should treat her well.

PETER. Give her a drink of milk and a bit of the oaten cake.

BRIDGET. Maybe we should give her something along with that, to bring her on her way. A few pence, or a shilling itself, and we with so much money in the house.

PETER. Indeed I'd not begrudge it to her if we had it to spare, but if

we go running through what we have, we'll soon have to break the hundred pounds, and that would be a pity.

BRIDGET. Shame on you, Peter. Give her the shilling, and your blessing with it, or our own luck will go from us.

[PETER _goes to the box and takes out a shilling._]

BRIDGET [_ to the _ OLD WOMAN]. Will you have a drink of milk?

OLD WOMAN. It is not food or drink that I want.

PETER [_ offering the shilling_]. Here is something for you.

OLD WOMAN. That is not what I want. It is not silver I want.

PETER. What is it you would be asking for?

OLD WOMAN. If anyone would give me help he must give me himself, he must give me all.

[PETER _goes over to the table, staring at the shilling in his hand in a bewildered way, and stands whispering to _ BRIDGET.]

MICHAEL. Have you no one to care you in your age, ma'am?

OLD WOMAN. I have not. With all the lovers that brought me their love, I never set out the bed for any.

MICHAEL. Are you lonely going the roads, ma'am?

OLD WOMAN. I have my thoughts and I have my hopes.

MICHAEL. What hopes have you to hold to?

OLD WOMAN. The hope of getting my beautiful fields back again; the hope of putting the strangers out of my house.

MICHAEL. What way will you do that, ma'am?

OLD WOMAN. I have good friends that will help me. They are gathering to help me now. I am not afraid. If they are put down to-day, they will get the upper hand to-morrow. [_ She gets up._] I must be going to meet my friends. They are coming to help me, and I must be there to welcome them. I must call the neighbours together to welcome them.

MICHAEL. I will go with you.

BRIDGET. It is not her friends you have to go and welcome, Michael; it is the girl coming into the house you have to welcome. You have plenty to do, it is food and drink you have to bring to the house. The woman that is coming home is not coming with empty hands; you would not have an empty house before her. [_ To the_ OLD WOMAN.] Maybe you don't know, ma'am, that my son is going to be married to-morrow.

OLD WOMAN. It is not a man going to his marriage that I look to for help.

PETER [_ to_ BRIDGET]. Who is she, do you think, at all?

BRIDGET. You did not tell us your name yet, ma'am.

OLD WOMAN. Some call me the Poor Old Woman, and there are some that call me Cathleen, the daughter of Houlihan.

PETER. I think I knew someone of that name once. Who was it, I wonder? It must have been someone I knew when I was a boy. No, no, I remember, I heard it in a song.

OLD WOMAN [_ who is standing in the doorway_]. They are wondering that there were songs made for me; there have been many songs made for me. I heard one on the wind this morning. [_ She sings._]

Do not make a great keening
When the graves have been dug to-morrow.
Do not call the white-scarfed riders
To the burying that shall be to-morrow.

Do not spread food to call strangers
To the wakes that shall be to-morrow;
Do not give money for prayers
For the dead that shall die to-morrow ...

they will have no need of prayers, they will have no need of prayers.

MICHAEL. I do not know what that song means, but tell me something I can do for you.

PETER. Come over to me, Michael.

MICHAEL. Hush, father, listen to her.

OLD WOMAN. It is a hard service they take that help me. Many that are red-cheeked now will be pale-cheeked; many that have been free to walk the hills and the bogs and the rushes will be sent to walk hard streets in far countries; many a good plan will be broken; many that have gathered money will not stay to spend it; many a child will be born,

and there will be no father at its christening to give it a name. They that had red cheeks will have pale cheeks for my sake; and for all that, they will think they are well paid.

[_She goes out; her voice is heard outside singing._]

They shall be remembered for ever,
They shall be alive for ever,
They shall be speaking for ever,
The people shall hear them for ever.

BRIDGET [_to_ PETER]. Look at him, Peter; he has the look of a man that has got the touch. [_Raising her voice._] Look here, Michael, at the wedding-clothes. Such grand clothes as these are. You have a right to fit them on now; it would be a pity to-morrow if they did not fit. The boys would be laughing at you. Take them, Michael, and go into the room and fit them on. [_She puts them on his arm._]

MICHAEL. What wedding are you talking of? What clothes will I be wearing to-morrow?

BRIDGET. These are the clothes you are going to wear when you marry Delia Cahel to-morrow.

MICHAEL. I had forgotten that.

[_He looks at the clothes and turns towards the inner room, but stops at the sound of cheering outside._]

PETER. There is the shouting come to our own door. What is it has happened?

[PATRICK _and_ DELIA _come in._]

PATRICK. There are ships in the Bay; the French are landing at Killala!

[PETER _takes his pipe from his mouth and his hat off, and stands up. The clothes slip from_ MICHAEL's _arm._]

DELIA. Michael! [_He takes no notice._] Michael! [_He turns towards her._] Why do you look at me like a stranger?

[_She drops his arm_ . BRIDGET _goes over towards her._]

PATRICK. The boys are all hurrying down the hillsides to join the French.

DELIA. Michael won't be going to join the French.

BRIDGET [_ to_ PETER]. Tell him not to go, Peter.

PETER. It's no use. He doesn't hear a word we're saying.

BRIDGET. Try and coax him over to the fire.

DELIA. Michael! Michael! You won't leave me! You won't join the French, and we going to be married!

[_ She puts her arms about him; he turns towards her as if about to yield._ OLD WOMAN's _voice outside._]

They shall be speaking for ever,
The people shall hear them for ever.

[MICHAEL _breaks away from_ DELIA _and goes out._]

PETER [_ to_ PATRICK, _laying a hand on his arm_]. Did you see an old woman going down the path?

PATRICK. I did not, but I saw a young girl, and she had the walk of a queen.

Verdi.

Project Gutenberg's *Great Italian and French Composers*, by George T. Ferris

I.

In 1872 the Khédive of Egypt, an oriental ruler, whose love of western art and civilization has since tangled him in economic meshes to escape from which has cost him his independence, produced a new opera with barbaric splendor of appointments, at Grand Cairo. The spacious theatre blazed with fantastic dresses and showy uniforms, and the curtain rose on a drama which gave a glimpse to the Arabs, Copts, and Franks present of the life and religion, the loves and hates of ancient Pharaonic times, set to music by the most celebrated of living Italian composers.

That an eastern prince should have commissioned Giuseppe Verdi to write "Aida" for him, in his desire to emulate western sovereigns as a patron of art, is an interesting fact, but not wonderful or significant.

The opera itself was freighted, however, with peculiar significance as an artistic work, far surpassing that of the circumstances which gave it origin, or which saw its first production in the mysterious land of the Nile and Sphinx.

Originally a pupil, thoroughly imbued with the method and spirit of Rossini, though never lacking in original quality, Verdi as a young man shared the suffrages of admiring audiences with Donizetti and Bellini. Even when he diverged widely from his parent stem and took rank as the representative of the melodramatic school of music, he remained true to the instincts of his Italian training.

The remarkable fact is that Verdi, at the age of fifty-eight, when it might have been safely assumed that his theories and preferences were finally crystallized, produced an opera in which he clasped hands with the German enthusiast, who preached an art system radically opposed to his own and lashed with scathing satire the whole musical cult of the Italian race.

In "Aida" and the "Manzoni Mass," written in 1873, Verdi, the leader among living Italian composers, practically conceded that, in the long, bitterly fought battle between Teuton and Italian in music, the former was the victor. In the opera we find a new departure, which, if not embodying all the philosophy of the "new school," is stamped with its salient traits, viz.: The subordination of all the individual effects to the perfection and symmetry of the whole; a lavish demand on all the sister arts to contribute their rich gifts to the heightening of the illusion; a tendency to enrich the harmonic value in the choruses, the concerted pieces, and the instrumentation, to the great sacrifice of the solo pieces; the use of the heroic and mythical element as a theme.

Verdi, the subject of this interesting revolution, has filled a very brilliant place in modern musical art, and his career has been in some ways as picturesque as his music.

Verdi's parents were literally hewers of wood and drawers of water, earning their bread, after the manner of Italian peasants, at a small settlement called La Roncali, near Busseto, where the future composer was born on October 9, 1814.

His earliest recollections were with the little village church, where the little Giuseppe listened with delight to the church organ, for, as with all great musicians, his fondness for music showed itself at a very early age. The elder Verdi, though very poor, gratified the child's love of music when he was about eight by buying a small spinet, and placing him under the instruction of Provesi, a teacher in Busseto. The boy entered on his studies with ardor, and made more rapid progress than the slender facilities which were allowed him would ordinarily justify.

An event soon occurred which was destined to wield a lasting influence on his destiny. He one day heard a skillful performance on a fine piano, while passing by one of the better houses of Busseto. From that time a constant fascination drew him to the house; for day after day he

lingered and seemed unwilling to go away lest he should perchance lose some of the enchanting sounds which so enraptured him. The owner of the premises was a rich merchant, one Antonio Barezzi, a cultivated and high-minded man, and a passionate lover of music withal. 'Twas his daughter whose playing gave the young Verdi such pleasure.

Signor Barezzi had often seen the lingering and absorbed lad, who stood as if in a dream, oblivious to all that passed around him in the practical work-a-day world. So one day he accosted him pleasantly and inquired why he came so constantly and stayed so long doing nothing.

"I play the piano a little," said the boy, "and I like to come here and listen to the fine playing in your house."

"Oh! if that is the case, come in with me that you may enjoy it more at your ease, and hereafter you are welcome to do so whenever you feel inclined."

It may be imagined the delighted boy did not refuse the kind invitation, and the acquaintance soon ripened into intimacy, for the rich merchant learned to regard the bright young musician with much affection, which it is needless to say was warmly returned. Verdi was untiring in study and spent the early years of his youth in humble quiet, in the midst of those beauties of nature which have so powerful an influence in molding great susceptibilities. At his seventeenth year he had acquired as much musical knowledge as could be acquired at a place like Busseto, and he became anxious to go to Milan to continue his studies. The poverty of his family precluding any assistance from this quarter, he was obliged to find help from an eleemosynary fund then existing in his native town. This was an institution called the Monte di Pietà, which offered yearly to four young men the sum of twenty-five lire a month each, in order to help them to an education; and Verdi, making an application and sustained by the influence of his friend the rich merchant, was one of the four whose good fortune it was to be selected.

The allowance thus obtained with some assistance from Barezzi enabled the ambitious young musician to go to Milan, carrying with him some of his compositions. When he presented himself for examination at the conservatory, he was made to play on the piano, and his compositions examined. The result fell on his hopes like a thunder-bolt. The pedantic and narrow-minded examiners not only scoffed at the state of his musical knowledge, but told him he was incapable of becoming a musician. To weaker souls this would have been a terrible discouragement, but to his ardor and self-confidence it was only a challenge. Barezzi had equal confidence in the abilities of his protégé, and warmly encouraged him to work and hope. Verdi engaged an excellent private teacher and pursued his studies with unflagging energy, denying himself all but the barest necessities, and going sometimes without sufficient food.

A stroke of fortune now fell in his way; the place of organist fell vacant at the Busseto church, and Verdi was appointed to fill it. He returned home, and was soon afterward married to the daughter of the benefactor to whom he owed so much. He continued to apply himself with great diligence to the study of his art, and completed an opera early in 1839. He succeeded in arranging for the production of this work, "L'Oberto, Conte de San Bonifacio," at La Scala, Milan; but it excited little comment and was soon forgotten, like the scores of other shallow or immature compositions so prolifically produced in Italy.

The impresario, Merelli, believed in the young composer though, for he thought he discovered signs of genius. So he gave him a contract to write three operas, one of which was to be an *opera buffa*, and to be ready in the following autumn. With hopeful spirits Verdi set to work on the opera, but that year of 1840 was to be one of great trouble and trial. Hardly had he set to work all afire with eagerness and hope, when he was seized with severe illness. His recovery was followed by the successive sickening of his two children, who died, a terrible blow to the father's fond heart. Fate had the crowning stroke though still to give, for the young mother, agonized by this loss, was seized with a fatal inflammation of the brain. Thus within a brief period Verdi was bereft of all the sweet consolations of home, and his life became a burden to him. Under these conditions he was to write a comic opera, full of sparkle, gayety, and humor. Can we wonder that his work was a failure? The public came to be amused by bright, joyous music, for it was nothing to them that the composer's heart was dead with grief at his afflictions. The audience hissed "Un Giorno di Regno," for it proved a funereal attempt at mirth. So Verdi sought to annul the contract. To this the impresario replied: "So be it, if you wish; but, whenever you want to write again on the same terms, you will find me ready."

To tell the truth, the composer was discouraged by his want of success, and wholly broken down by his numerous trials. He now withdrew from all society, and, having hired a small room in an out-of-the-way part of Milan, passed most of his time in reading the worst books that could be found, rarely going out, unless occasionally in the evening, never giving his attention to study of any kind, and never touching the piano. Such was his life from October, 1840, to January, 1841. One evening, early in the new year, while out walking, he chanced to meet Merelli, who took him by the arm; and, as they sauntered toward the theatre, the impresario told him that he was in great trouble, Nicolai, who was to write an opera for him, having refused to accept a *libretto* entitled "Nabucco."

To this Verdi replied:

"I am glad to be able to relieve you of your difficulty. Don't you remember the libretto of 'Il Proscritto,' which you procured for me, and for which I have never composed the music? Give that to Nicolai in place

of 'Nabucco.'"

Merelli thanked him for his kind offer, and, as they reached the theatre, asked him to go in, that they might ascertain whether the manuscript of "Il Proscritto" was really there. It was at length found, and Verdi was on the point of leaving, when Merelli slipped into his pocket the book of "Nabucco," asking him to look it over. For want of something to do, he took up the drama the next morning and read it through, realizing how truly grand it was in conception. But, as a lover forces himself to feign indifference to his coquettish *_innamorata_*, so he, disregarding his inclinations, returned the manuscript to Merelli that same day.

"Well?" said Merelli, inquiringly.

"Musicabilissimo!" he replied; "full of dramatic power and telling situations!"

"Take it home with you, then, and write the music for it."

Verdi declared that he did not wish to compose, but the worthy impresario forced the manuscript on him, and persisted that he should undertake the work. The composer returned home with the libretto, but threw it on one side without looking at it, and for the next five months continued his reading of bad romances and yellow-covered novels.

The impulse of work soon came again, however. One beautiful June day the manuscript met his eye, while looking listlessly over some old papers. He read one scene and was struck by its beauty. The instinct of musical creation rushed over him with irresistible force; he seated himself at the piano, so long silent, and began composing the music. The ice was broken. Verdi soon entered into the spirit of the work, and in three months "Nabucco" was entirely completed. Merelli gladly accepted it, and it was performed at La Scala in the spring of 1842. As a result Verdi was besieged with petitions for new works from every impresario in Italy.

II.

From 1812 to 1851 Verdi's busy imagination produced a series of operas, which disputed the palm of popularity with the foremost composers of his time. "I Lombardi," brought out at La Scala in 1843; "Ernani," at Venice in 1844; "I Due Foscari," at Rome in 1844; "Giovanna D'Arco," at Milan, and "Alzira," at Naples in 1845; "Attila," at Venice in 1846; and "Macbetto," at Florence in 1847, were--all of them--successful works. The last created such a genuine enthusiasm that he was crowned with a golden aurel-wreath and escorted home from the theatre by an enormous crowd. "I Masnadieri" was written for Jenny Lind, and performed first

in London in 1847 with that great singer, Gardoni, and Lablache, in the cast. His next productions were "Il Corsaro," brought out at Trieste in 1848; "La Battaglia di Legnano" at Rome in 1849; "Luisa Miller" at Naples in the same year; and "Stiffelio" at Trieste in 1850. By this series of works Verdi impressed himself powerfully on his age, but in them he preserved faithfully the color and style of the school in which he had been trained. But he had now arrived at the commencement of his transition period. A distinguished French critic marks this change in the following summary: "When Verdi began to write, the influences of foreign literature and new theories on art had excited Italian composers to seek a violent expression of the passions, and to leave the interpretation of amiable and delicate sentiments for that of sombre flights of the soul. A serious mind gifted with a rich imagination, Verdi became the chief of the new school. His music became more intense and dramatic; by vigor, energy, verve, a certain ruggedness and sharpness, by powerful effects of sound, he conquered an immense popularity in Italy, where success had hitherto been attained only by the charm, suavity, and abundance of the melodies produced."

In "Rigoletto," produced in Venice in 1851, the full flowering of his genius into the melodramatic style was signally shown. The opera story adapted from Victor Hugo's "Le Roi s'amuse" is itself one of the most dramatic of plots, and it seemed to have fired the composer into music singularly vigorous, full of startling effects and novel treatment. Two years afterward were brought out at Rome and Venice respectively two operas, stamped with the same salient qualities, "Il Trovatore" and "La Traviata," the last a lyric adaptation of Dumas fil's "Dame aux Camélias." These three operas have generally been considered his masterpieces, though it is more than possible that the riper judgment of the future will not sustain this claim. Their popularity was such that Verdi's time was absorbed for several years in their production at various opera-houses, utterly precluding new compositions. Of his later operas may be mentioned "Les Vêpres Siciliennes," produced in Paris in 1855; "Un Ballo in Maschera," performed at Rome in 1859; "La Forza del Destino," written for St. Petersburg, where it was sung in 1863; "Don Carlos," produced in London in 1867; and "Aida" in Grand Cairo in 1872. When the latter work was finished, Verdi had composed twenty-nine operas, beside lesser works, and attained the age of fifty-seven.

Verdi's energies have not been confined to music. An ardent patriot, he has displayed the deepest interest in the affairs of his country, and taken an active part in its tangled politics. After the war of 1859 he was chosen a member of the Assembly of Parma, and was one of the most influential advocates for the annexation to Sardinia. Italian unity found in him a passionate advocate, and, when the occasion came, his artistic talent and earnestness proved that they might have made a vigorous mark in political oratory as well as in music.

The cry of "Viva Verdi" often resounded through Sardinia and Italy, and

it was one of the war-slogans of the Italian war of liberation. This enigma is explained in the fact that the five letters of his name are the initials of those of Vittorio Emanuele Rè D'Italia. His private resources were liberally poured forth to help the national cause, and in 1861 he was chosen a deputy in Parliament from Parma. Ten years later he was appointed by the Minister of Public Instruction to superintend the reorganization of the National Musical Institute.

The many decorations and titular distinctions lavished on him show the high esteem in which he is held. He is a member of the Legion of Honor, corresponding member of the French Academy of Fine Arts, grand cross of the Prussian order of St. Stanislaus, of the order of the Crown of Italy, and of the Egyptian order of Osmanli. He divides his life between a beautiful residence at Genoa, where he overlooks the waters of the sparkling Mediterranean, and a country villa near his native Busseto, a house of quaint artistic architecture, approached by a venerable, moss-grown stone bridge, at the foot of which are a large park and artificial lake. When he takes his evening walks, the peasantry, who are devotedly attached to him, unite in singing choruses from his operas.

In Verdi's bedroom, where alone he composes, is a fine piano--of which instrument, as well as of the violin, he is a master--a modest library, and an oddly-shaped writing-desk. Pictures and statuettes, of which he is very fond, are thickly strewn about the whole house. Verdi is a man of vigorous and active habits, taking an ardent interest in agriculture. But the larger part of his time is taken up in composing, writing letters, and reading works on philosophy, politics, and history. His personal appearance is very distinguished. A tall figure with sturdy limbs and square shoulders, surmounted by a finely-shaped head; abundant hair, beard, and mustache, whose black is sprinkled with gray; dark-gray eyes, regular features, and an earnest, sometimes intense, expression make him a noticeable-looking man. Much sought after in the brilliant society of Florence, Rome, and Paris, our composer spends most of his time in the elegant seclusion of home.

III.

Verdi is the most nervous, theatric, sensuous composer of the present century. Measured by the highest standard, his style must be criticised as often spasmodic, tawdry, and meretricious. He instinctively adopts a bold and eccentric treatment of musical themes; and, though there are always to be found stirring movements in his scores as well as in his opera stories, he constantly offends refined taste by sensation and violence.

With a redundancy of melody, too often of the cheap and shallow kind, he rarely fails to please the masses of opera-goers, for his works enjoy a popularity not shared at present by any other composer. In Verdi a

sudden blaze of song, brief spirited airs, duets, trios, etc., take the place of the elaborate and beautiful music, chiseled into order and symmetry, which characterizes most of the great composers of the past. Energy of immediate impression is thus gained at the expense of that deep, lingering power, full of the subtle side-lights and shadows of suggestion, which is the crowning benison of great music. He stuns the ear and captivates the senses, but does not subdue the soul.

Yet, despite the grievous faults of these operas, they blaze with gems, and we catch here and there true swallow-flights of genius, that the noblest would not disown. With all his puerilities there is a mixture of grandeur. There are passages in "Ernani," "Rigoletto," "Traviata," "Trovatore," and "Aida," so strong and dignified, that it provokes a wonder that one with such capacity for greatness should often descend into such bathos.

To better illustrate the false art which mars so much of Verdi's dramatic method, a comparison between his "Rigoletto," so often claimed as his best work, and Rossini's "Otello" will be opportune. The air sung by Gilda in the "Rigoletto," when she retires to sleep on the eve of the outrage, is an empty, sentimental yawn; and in the quartet of the last act, a noble dramatic opportunity, she ejects a chain of disconnected, unmusical sobs, as offensive as Violetta's consumptive cough. Desdemona's agitated air, on the other hand, under Rossini's treatment, though broken short in the vocal phrase, is magnificently sustained by the orchestra, and a genuine passion is made consistently musical; and then the wonderful burst of bravura, where despair and resolution run riot without violating the bounds of strict beauty in music--these are master-strokes of genius restrained by art.

In Verdi, passion too often misses intensity and becomes hysterical. He lacks the elements of tenderness and humor, but is frequently picturesque and charming by his warmth and boldness of color. His attempts to express the gay and mirthful, as for instance in the masquerade music of "Traviata" and the dance music of "Rigoletto," are dreary, ghastly, and saddening; while his ideas of tenderness are apt to take the form of mere sentimentality. Yet generalities fail in describing him, for occasionally he attains effects strong in their pathos, and artistically admirable; as, for example, the slow air for the heroine, and the dreamy song for the gypsy mother in the last act of "Trovatore." An artist who thus contradicts himself is a perplexing problem, but we must judge him by the habitual, not the occasional.

Verdi is always thoroughly in earnest, never frivolous. He walks on stilts indeed, instead of treading the ground or cleaving the air, but is never timid or tame in aim or execution. If he cannot stir the emotions of the soul he subdues and absorbs the attention against even the dictates of the better taste; while genuine beauties gleaming through picturesque rubbish often repay the true musician for what he

has undergone.

So far this composer has been essentially representative of melodramatic music, with all the faults and virtues of such a style. In "Aida," his last work, the world remarked a striking change. The noble orchestration, the power and beauty of the choruses, the sustained dignity of treatment, the seriousness and pathos of the whole work, reveal how deeply new purposes and methods have been fermenting in the composer's development. Yet in the very prime of his powers, though no longer young, his next work ought to settle the value of the hopes raised by the last.

Rome

The Project Gutenberg EBook of *By the Way -- Travel Letters*, by Agness Greene Foster

The first thing to learn in Rome is the pronunciation of the name of the street and the number of your pension, in order that you may be able to get home. Our pronunciation is set-tahn-tah dew-ey vee-ah sis-teen-ah, and the manner with which we hop into a cab and say it to the cocchiere stamps us as old Italians.

Our home here is at the top of the Scala di Spagna (Spanish steps), right in the heart of the new town. We walk down the steps every morning as we start out to the American Express office to get our letters, but we come up the "lift"—for ten centimes.

* * * * *

It is absolutely necessary to be driven about Rome accompanied by a guide, whether one's stay is to be of long or short duration. In no other manner can one comprehensively grasp this vast array of ancient and modern art, nor the colossal expanse of architecture, both standing and in ruins. After having been shown the important places, it is well to return alone, and at leisure ponder over those things which most appeal to the heart as well as to the senses.

* * * * *

I have had a careful explanation of the significance of that much-used word—"basilica." Originally it was a portico separated from some public building, not unlike the peristyle at our Columbian Exposition, save that it need not, of necessity, be near any body of water; in fact, it rarely was in the old Roman days. The basilicas of the old forums were really walks under cover. In later days these porticos were inclosed

and made into churches. The name "basilica" still clung to them, and now the oblong space forming the main body between the pillars in any church edifice, without regard to the style of architecture, is so called.

* * * *

I have read somewhere, in the reveries of a bachelor (not Ik Marvel's), that "style is born IN a woman and ON a man." I wonder how he knew—perhaps he had been in Rome.

The style of the greater number of foreign tourists of the female persuasion must be "in," as there is little visible to the naked eye. But the style of these Italian soldiers is "on," indeed, and they are on dress parade the livelong day. I have used all my superlatives, but really in no city on earth does one see such gloriously, exquisitely dressed little men as are the soldiers of Italy, and especially of Rome. The Bersaglieri form the élite corps, and wear a large round hat, with a multitude of cock's plumes, tipped far on one side of the head. This tribute to the swagger appearance of the soldiers is also applicable to the young priests, monks and students, and even to the butlers and footmen.

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On a fête day we went to St. Peter's, and were repaid by meeting our Portuguese friends, who took us to drive through the beautiful parks and grounds of the Villa Borghese, returning to luncheon with us at our pension. This home of ours is a very attractive place, but it tries my patience to be forced to go through a ten-course dinner each night, when I am anxious to get out. The words "change" and "haste" are unknown here, and it is only endurable because the dinner is so exquisitely prepared and served.

We have some interesting and clever people at our table—a family from Boston, two girls from Washington, a brother and sister from Philadelphia, who have lived here for years, and a beautiful Canadian. The last named sits next me, and our sotto voce conversations have brought out the fact that her heart is full of love for all things. She is Canadian only by birth, and among the array of smartly dressed Americans in the pension, she leads.

I do not wish to be put on record as one who judges a woman solely by her clothes; but oh, the American woman here is incomparable. I agree with Lilian Bell, that the women of no other race can compare with her in dress, or taste, or carriage. She is bewitching! She is a type! I believe I once told you that we had no type. I take it back. We have, and so glorious a one that I am proud to claim kinship with her.

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You will be shocked, I am sure, when I tell you that I do not agree with Mr. Howells, nor yet with my beloved Hawthorne, for I love modern Rome. To be sure, Hawthorne wrote of Rome in 1858, and Mr. Howells in 1864, and it may be the shops were not so altogether enticing in those early days, or it may be because they were not women that the shops had no charm for them; but if they had known Castellani, the goldsmith on the Piazzzi di Trevi, who executes designs from the old Grecian, Etruscan and Byzantine models, or Roccheggiani's exquisite mosaics and cameo carvings, it is probable their opinions would be modified.

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Michelangelo's "Moses" is not in the big St. Peter's of the Vatican, but in St. Peter's of Vincoli. This was a surprise to me, for I had supposed to the contrary. I had asked many times, to no avail, why Michelangelo put horns on his "Moses," until a learned monk told me that, in an early translation of the Scriptures, the word "horns" was incorrectly given for "skin." Notwithstanding the disproportion of its outlines, the gigantic statue is, to me, the most wonderful thing ever cut from a block of marble.

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We have an _ascensor_ in our _pension_. The big _concierge_ puts me in, locks the door, unlocks the catch, and lets it go. When it gets to my floor it is supposed to stop, and in the same breath to have its door unfastened, and all I have to do is to walk _out_. Sometimes, however, it stops midway between floors, and then I wish I had walked _up_. I find Roman and Spanish steps just as fatiguing to climb as any others, and patronize the _ascensors_ with vigor.

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We went by appointment one day to the Rospigliosi Palazzo to return the visit of our Portuguese friends, Signor and Signora A., and were taken into another part of the palace to see Guido Reni's "Aurora." The picture is painted on the ceiling, and there is an arrangement of mirrors by which one can view it without having to tire the neck with looking up so constantly. It is the greatest painting that has been done in the last two hundred years. In the evening we all went to hear "Gioconda" at the _Teâtre Adriano_. The Italian audience seemed, by the uproarious applause that greeted each aria, to appreciate the music, but talked continually through it all.

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We have revisited many of the places which most interested us during our three days' drive with the _cicerone_, and have whiled away many

delightful mornings in the shops. We rest a little in the early part of each afternoon, and then, almost invariably, we drive on the Corso and to the Pincian Gardens, where the band plays from five until an hour after _Ave Maria_. Here one sees the smart Romans, and in fact people of nearly every race on earth, in their best attire, on pleasure bent.

It is needless to tell you that we take a carriage _sans numero_, for the private parks of the best palazzos allow only carriages without numbers to enter.

The scene on the Pincio is just what it was in Hawthorne's day. Read his description of it in the "Italian Note Book," and you will see it more clearly than I can make you understand. It is a continual _fête champêtre_.

One day, while we were obliged to stop on account of a jam in the ring of carriages that move slowly round and round the circle where the band plays, Ruth stepped from the vehicle to get nearer the beautiful fountain of Moses to make a little sketch of it. I sat alone listening to the glorious Italian band. And while my thoughts were thousands of miles away, and very near the one to whom this message goes first, some one spoke to me in French, and asked if I would have the goodness to go to his madame. It was the serving-man of our fellow-voyager, she of the same initials as my own. I looked in the direction he indicated, and there, not ten carriages back, she was, so hemmed in that it was impossible to drive alongside.

As I left my seat and walked over to her, she met me with the radiant face and smiling greeting of an old friend. She is beautiful, with that inimitable something about her that attracts one, and I wondered if I should ever know what her given name is. I knew for a certainty that I should never ask. She is not old, but gives one the impression that she has lived long enough to have "gathered the fruits of experience where once blossomed the flowers of youthful enthusiasm."

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The bells for _Ave Maria_ had rung. The musicians were picking up their music. The Pincian Hill was deserted. Ruth sat alone in her carriage as this woman's hand grasped mine in reluctant parting.

"Good night," I said.

"Good night!"

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You recall my telling you of Mrs. F. on the ship—she whom I met on the Pincian Hill—and her invalid son? Well, he was not her son. He is

her—husband.

It will be no breach of confidence to tell you the story, for I have her permission—withholding her name, of course.

It seems that the husband, in his youth, was rather "rapid"; and, in a most idiotic will, the father left him a large fortune, provided that before his twenty-fifth year he had been married to a woman at least ten years his senior. It was stipulated that the woman was not to know the conditions of the will until after the marriage, so that she might be some one of worth and character, capable of caring for the money.

No wonder it sobered the poor young man. He swore that he would never marry, and that those who were ready to grasp the fortune, should he fail to "keep the bond," might have it, and be—happy.

One vacation time found him at the home of a classmate in one of the eastern college towns, where he met and fell in love with this woman whom I have described to you. He had no idea she was older than himself until he had made her a proposal of marriage. She, of course, refused what she conceived to be a foolish boy's fancy. He sent for his mother, and together they set themselves to win the lady of his choice, after the mother had "looked her up"—and down—as mothers of precious boys are wont to do.

In the meantime the young man was taken very ill, in his delirium calling for his love, who finally, at the physician's urgent request, went to him, and, with his mother, cared for him.

It was the day before his twenty-fifth birthday. The mother was frantic at the thought that her son was to lose his fortune. He cared little for the money, save that it would enable him to shower favors upon this love of his. He begged her to marry him that night to save him from some great trouble—if she ever regretted it for one moment she should be free—that he could not in honor tell her why it was so necessary that the marriage be solemnized at once. She had grown fond of him, yet naturally hesitated to do either him or herself injustice. Finally his helplessness and his mother's agony proved too much for her, and just before the midnight they were married at his bedside.

Who can account for the vagaries of a woman's fancy? The foolish conditions which she made a part of this contract were: that they should live abroad where they were not known, and that she should be known as his mother.

His own mother, otherwise a strong, sensible woman, agreed to everything, so great was her anxiety about her son.

In another week they had started for Europe, and I have accounted to you

the strange manner in which their names appeared on the ship's register. It served as a safeguard against inquisitive people, and every one took it for granted that they were mother and son—and she a widow.

Immediately they landed they met an old friend of hers, and thus began a series of explanations, for her friend knew she had no son.

Fortunately this woman was a brave, true friend, and her advice was so heroic that the bride was speechless before such fearlessness.

She said to her: "You must stop all this foolishness at once. There is absolutely no excuse for such deceit. One falsehood paves the way for hundreds of others. It has already cost you the loss of your peace of mind and it is the cause of your husband's continued illness. How can you expect him to be strong, while living a lie?"

This last statement was pretty hard to accept, but it proved that her liking for her young husband had grown into love, for her one desire was to see him well and strong.

Her pride, however, stood in her way and she must have advice. Everything else the friend said was true, for already her day had become a hideous nightmare with this constant fear of meeting some one whom she knew. And this is why she sent her footman for me the day of the concert in the Pincian Gardens.

She explained that she had heard Ruth and me discussing points in ontology on the ship, and wanted to ask me if what her friend said was true. She told me the story just as I have told it to you, not naming herself. I divined at once it was her own, but did not let her feel that I had perceived it, and for answer I said:

"How I should love to meet that friend! Most assuredly she is right. Falsehood and deceit bring nothing but suffering. Send word to that poor foolish woman at once that you too are opposed to her living a lie any longer."

It was listening to this tale that made me forget the crowd, the perfume of the flowers, and even the exquisite music of the King's band.

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How glad I am that I saw dear old England first, for it seems very young when compared to Rome. Everything here is twenty centuries or more old, therefore you may imagine that, by comparison, things only a few hundred years old are yet in their infancy.

Apropos of age, while at Oxford a student told us, with much solemnity, that Magdalen College "was built in 1490, before you were discovered."

The doctor said, "Well, what of it?" I was shocked at the good doctor, and was much impressed by the great age; but I understand the doctor's sarcasm now, for he had recently returned from Rome.

The "oldest church in Rome," however, reminds one of "the favorite pupil of Liszt." I am meeting with them still.

The most magnificent place in Rome, after the Vatican, is the Villa Borghese (bor-gay-zay), not only on account of the beautiful park which contains numerous ornamental structures, little temples, ruins, fountains and statues, but also on account of the collection of antiques in its casino, or gallery. It is here that Canova's marble statue of Pauline Borghese is exhibited—to me the most beautiful marble in Rome. Here, too, is Titian's first great work, "Sacred and Profane Love." I fancy that Titian saw life from many view-points.

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Imagine one going from the sublime to the ridiculous—from the gorgeous Borghese Villa to a Rag Fair. A Rag Fair is an open-air sale of everything that can be thought of, from a garter clasp to a diadem. We went for old brass candlesticks of the seven-pronged, sacred variety, afterwards continuing on to St. Peter's, where we were repaid for mounting an incline of 1,332 feet up through the dome by the view of all Rome, the Vatican gardens and the tops of the "seven hills."

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Mrs. F. joins us often now. She went with us again Thursday to the church _San Paola alle Tre Fontane_ (St. Paul of the Three Fountains). It is kept by Trappist monks, a silent order. They never speak to each other, but make up for it when visitors come. We had a dear "brother" show us the objects of interest, and he presented each with a wee drinking glass to measure out the Eucalyptus wine which they make there.

The three fountains are flowing clear as crystal, and whether or not the head of St. Paul jumped three times on these spots, as tradition has it, it matters little; but the simple faith of the sweet-faced sisters who knelt and drank from each spring and arose freed from some claim was touching, and far from provoking the mirth that some people feel toward these devout pilgrims.

En route home we stopped at the English cemetery and plucked a flower from the grave of Keats and of Shelley and of Constance Fenimore Woolson.

We saw Hilda's Tower, too, that day. I had occasion to thank Hawthorne for "The Marble Faun" and "Italian Note Book," otherwise I should not have been able to relate the story of Hilda and her tower. In truth,

all Italy would have remained as a closed book to me had it not been for my three "H's," as Ruth calls them—Hawthorne, Howells and Hutton. The latter says, in his "Literary Landmarks of Rome," that the "Italian Note Book" is still the best guide to Rome that has ever been written, and that one should read it before coming, again while here, and yet once more after returning home.

I shall say the same about the Landmarks, for without them much of the charm I have found here would have been lost.

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Yesterday we bade St. Peter's good-bye on our way to Sant'Onofrio. Here, again, a bright young _frère_ showed us over the church made most interesting from its association with Tasso. There are some excellent paintings in the lunettes under the colonnade of the cloisters.

It is a great pleasure to show Mrs. F. anything, as her appreciation is keen. She knew little of the literary landmarks which she passed each day, and I pointed out to her the house where Keats lived, on the left as one goes down the Spanish steps, the house of Shelley on the right, with the lodgings occupied by Byron almost directly opposite.

On our return from Sant'Onofrio, she inquired of the coachman if the horses were fit, and upon his answering that they were good for several hours, she turned and in a low voice asked me to remain with her as long as possible. I understood. From a list of streets and numbers which I had with me, we selected such as we wished to visit.

On the Via di Bocca di Leona we found the home of the Brownings; close by, the house that sheltered Thackeray in Rome; and not far away, the place where Adelaide Sartoris lived. In rapid succession, then, we made "little journeys" to the Italian homes of Louisa Alcott, Helen Hunt Jackson, George Eliot, and the house where Mrs. Jameson held Sunday _soirées_ in a wee two-by-four room. Mr. Hutton and I did good work, for after all other sights had failed to interest, our (?) literary landmarks succeeded in saving the day.